

ENGLISH



MY MOTHER AT SIXTY-SIX

~Summary~

-by Kamala Das

Stanza- 1

"Driving from my parent's
home to Cochin last Friday
morning, I saw my mother, beside me,
doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that of a corpse"

Explanation: The poet had gone to visit her parents' home near Cochin. On Friday morning, she was returning. On her way to the airport, she noticed her mother sleeping beside her in the car. Her mouth was open. Her face was pale and lifeless, just like a dead body. It perhaps expressed the pain she felt because of separation from her daughter.

Stanza- 2

"And realized with pain that she was as
old as she looked but soon put that thought away
and looked out at young Trees sprinting,
the merry children spilling out of their homes"

Explanation: The poet was alarmed by the sudden realization that old age had crept upon her mother. It was a reality she found hard to accept. The poet was pained to see her mother's colorless pale face. To take her attention away from the disturbing thought, she looked outside the car.

Because the car was moving, the young green trees appeared to be running in the opposite direction. She also saw a group of children rushing out of their homes to play.

All this probably reminded her of her childhood when her mother was young. The young sprinting trees represented how fast time had flown by. The children represented youth, which was full of life and energy. Both the young trees and the children presented a sharp contrast to the mother sitting beside her who was old and suffering from ill-health.

Stanza- 3

"But after the airport's
security check, standing a few yards
away, I looked again at her, wan, pale
as a late winter's moon"

Explanation: The young children and trees were able to divert her thoughts away. But after reaching the airport and passing through security check, the poet again looked at her mother, who was standing a few yards away from her. Her mother looked lifeless and dull like a late winter's moon, which cannot be seen clearly because of mist and fog.

Stanza- 4

"And felt that old
familiar ache, my childhood's fear,
but all I said was, see you soon, Amma,
all I did was smile and smile and smile ..."

Explanation: Once again, she was pained to see her mother in this condition. As she was going away and leaving her mother, her old familiar pain, her childhood fear that she would lose her mother, suddenly came back to her. So she tried to hide her emotions behind her smile. She did not want to reveal her feelings to her old mother and bade her farewell with a smile. She gave hope to her mother and herself by saying that they would meet again and kept on smiling.